

## HOME LIFE OF THE TAFTS

## THINGS ABOUT THE FAMILY THAT PLEASE VISITORS.

The Whole Spirit of the Household Frank, unaffected, genuine—A Chat With Mrs. Taft—One Son Making His Mark at Yale—Miss Taft Bound for Bryn Mawr.

WASHINGTON, June 20.—If March 4, 1909, puts William H. Taft into the White House it will present to the possession of the American people an uncommonly likable family.

For the matter of that the American people is not waiting for March 4, 1909. So far as it has been able it has already moved into the Taft residence in Washington and has camped on the spot. There one may see every day the camera brigade firing fast and furiously. There come and go the newspaper correspondents. At least they come and occasionally, some of them go.

One ingenious young woman who turned up the other day confided to Mrs. Taft her conviction that the public was suffering for a glimpse of the inner home life of the Taft family. She proposed that she be allowed "just to sit there" and, so to speak, observe the wheels of family affection go round.

It was a deep disappointment to her to find that the Secretary was at the War Office, that Mrs. Taft was going out to luncheon, that Charlie was at school, and that Miss Helen, though at home, wasn't giving exhibitions of inner home life.

It was an absurd notion on the part of

thumbed quite to pieces, for it has entirely disappeared now. "Of course we have the books in our own library and I think I read 'Pride and Prejudice' at least once a year even now. And Thackeray, too, I read and reread without ever losing my taste for him."

There you are! No "Yellowplush" snobbery can find footing in a household presided over by an American woman who is so alive to the delicate ironies of Jane Austen and of Thackeray as to take them for steady literary diet.

## CHARLIE THE BOOKLOVER.

But though a genuine lover of books, Mrs. Taft is no bluestocking, no high browed pedant. She says that she honestly does try to keep up on general literature, but her manner plainly asserts that if you take advantage of that statement to start a disquisition on sociology or modern philosophy she will be distinctly disappointed in you. And you are wise and ask instead whether the children share this love of reading. Again her face lights up.

"Indeed," she says, "I think Charlie eats and sleeps with books for his companions. He loves reading better than anything else. He has actually read the whole section in the Congressional Library devoted to boys' books."

"He brings them home by the armful, sleeps with one under his pillow at night, dresses with an open book in front of him, brings them to the table with him and is never long separated from them."

"He is only 10, and of course the books he reads are chiefly boys' stories, but he will always love books. Of that I am sure. Not that he is a bookworm. He is a grea



MRS. WILLIAM H. TAFT.

likable a girl as one could hope to see.

As for vanity, she evidently hasn't a trace of it. That became perfectly evident when the subject of photographs came up. She wasn't a bit keen about having her picture appear in the paper, but when it was put before her as a sort of penalty which she would have to pay under the circumstances she was like her mother in her philosophical acceptance of the situation. Oh, all right, take the picture along.

But there the reporter rebelled for her. The only picture this pretty seventeen-year-old girl had to offer was one taken a few weeks ago as a sort of class picture when she was graduated at preparatory school, and of all the travesties on a pretty face it was about as hopeless a one as could be made.

The reporter protested that it did the original too great an injustice. Mrs. Taft was of the same mind. Photographers had been telephoning and begging to be allowed to photograph Miss Helen. Her mother told her she really ought to go down and have it done.

The girl looked at the condemned picture indifferently. "I don't think it's so bad of me," she said calmly. "I don't think I'll get anything better, mother."

All of which is interesting because it shows a wholesome unaffectedness which is very attractive. People have thought that because Helen Taft was going to enter Bryn Mawr she must be "horribly intellectual." That she is exceedingly clever there is no doubt. But neither is there any doubt that she is a girl full of the tastes of all seventeen-year-old girlhood.

She spent June week at Annapolis and enjoyed that unique seven days of gaiety to a degree that settles the question whether she cares for society or not. In fact there are dark suspicions that if the inner home life of the Taft family is transferred to the White House next spring Bryn Mawr may not retain a full four years hold upon one of its fair students. But she will enter next fall, at any rate, and will probably make the good record which the Taft young folks seem to achieve so easily.

MRS. TAFT NO STRANGER IN THE WHITE HOUSE.

Mrs. Taft herself was not a college graduate. She has four years in the Cincinnati University, but did not complete the course. A year or two after she came out into society she took a class of boys for a year in a private school in Cincinnati. She says she wanted to see what she could do to take care of herself if necessary. That was before her engagement to Mr. Taft and she taught only one year.

The White House will not be new or strange to any of the Tafts. The Secretary of course is at home through both his official and personal relations with the Administration.

Charlie is a friend of Quentin, and Miss Helen is a companion of Ethel Roosevelt. Bob, the Yale sophomore, has been there less than the others owing to his absence at college, but he too has his friendships with the older Roosevelt boys.

As for Mrs. Taft, her introduction to the White House goes back to her early childhood, when she spent a great deal of time there with President and Mrs. Hayes, who were devoted to her. As a member of "Mrs. Roosevelt's cabinet" she has been at the White House a great deal, and it will seem far from strange to her if it becomes her home. She will be an admirable hostess, and as she is not only a lover of music but a musician herself she probably will continue to be characterized by the musical turn which Mrs. Roosevelt has given them.

Ordinarily the Tafts spend their summers at Murray Bay, in Canada, where they have occupied the same house for a long suc-

cession of seasons, except when they made their recent journey around the world. They live an outdoor, free life there. There is golf, tennis and boating. At least there is boating for the Taft young folks, although comparatively few of the summer residents like to risk the dangers of the St. Lawrence there, with its currents and its twenty foot tides. There's driving in the native vehicle, the calèche, which rocks along on two wheels, the driver in front, his legs hanging over.

When before the convention she was asked whether they would go to Murray Bay this summer Mrs. Taft laughed frankly.

"Perhaps you know as much about that as I do," she said. "It all depends on what happens on the seventeenth of June. If my candidate is nominated we won't go to Murray Bay this year. We will find a place on our own seashore which will be more accessible."

## ORIENTAL STAMP ON THE TAFT HOME.

The Taft residence is a typical American home of comfort and ease without ostentation. It shows at a glance the long residence of the family in the Orient, with its teakwood furniture, Japanese bronzes and gorgeous Japanese and Chinese embroideries and inlaid screens.

It is at 1603 K street, in the heart of the most fashionable district. The home of Admiral Dewey is next on the east and the home of Senator Wetmore is on the west. Opposite is the residence of Senator Elkins, and in the same block is the home of Mrs. Bonaparte.

The house is roomy and substantial, with a central hall of generous width, two large drawing rooms on one side and a large reception room on the other, with the dining room at the back. On the second floor are the sitting room and a large library, with the sleeping rooms on the second and third floors.

The three Taft children have all won honors at school. The eldest, Robert Alphonso, is 15 years old, as a freshman at Yale last year carried off the honors of his class and as a sophomore is still at the head. Miss Helen Taft took the honors of her class in the Cathedral School for Girls on the Tenthalltown road two years ago, and this spring was graduated from Miss Baldwin's school at Bryn Mawr, preparatory to entering Bryn Mawr College next fall. Charles Phelps Taft, the youngest, and perhaps the best known of his family in the newspapers, next to his father, is 10 and one of the brightest pupils in the Force School, the most fashionable of the public schools in Washington.

Among his schoolmates have been the two youngest sons of the President, Archibald and Quentin Roosevelt; the twin sons of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Barnes and Phelps Newberry; the son of the recently returned Chinese Minister, Mr. Wu, who is now on his way back to Washington with his wife, and the son of Gen. Leonard Wood.

Miss Taft bears a strong likeness to her father, but her two brothers are much like their mother. Miss Taft has not only her father's features and coloring, but his taste and much of his nature as well.

Robert Taft is not of the ordinary type of honor man of his class. In spite of his studious tendencies he is an athlete and is in the second sophomore crew at Yale. He has developed a particular fondness for rowing, although his preference some time ago was for football.

The children are all enthusiastic riders, like their father. Each had his own pony, and even Mrs. Taft spent more time on horse or pony than she did driving. The four years spent in Manila were known to the most joyous family have among them. They enjoyed every minute of the time and Mrs. Taft and Charlie returned last summer

to the scene of their residence there with pleasure.

## MRS. TAFT'S MUSICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Mrs. Taft is a daughter of Judge John W. Herron of Cincinnati, a contemporary at the bar of Secretary Taft's father. The two families were fast friends from the time their children were small and the Secretary of War and his wife grew up together. Their engagement was announced when the Secretary was a slender young graduate from Yale University.

Mrs. Taft was a brilliant musician in those days, with a predilection for the piano. Of late years the duties of motherhood and of hostess in official society have interfered with her music. She says: "Oh, yes, I play now, but I am not a pianist," which means she plays almost as well as she ever did, but only for her own and her family's amusement.

Mrs. Taft was one of the original members of the music club in Cincinnati from which the Cincinnati Orchestra emanated. This was the Ladies' Musical Club, an organization which had a flourishing existence. Some of the members reached out and formed a larger organization, including men in the membership and known as the Cincinnati Orchestra Association. Mrs. Taft was made the president and was the leading spirit in the work of the orchestra.

The association was duly incorporated with a stock capital, and the Cincinnati Orchestra, under the leadership of Frank Van Der Stucken, was organized. It was controlled by a board of women managers and was active for fourteen years.

It is not dead now but is lying dormant. Although for several years Mrs. Taft has not been the president, she is still on the board of managers and it is a cherished hope of hers that during the coming season the orchestra will be reorganized and revived.

At the time of her resignation as president the musicians of the orchestra presented her with a tall silver tankard, heavily wrought, as a testimonial of their appreciation of her efforts for the establishment of a permanent orchestra. This is one of her most valued possessions. The association raised an annual fund of \$40,000 for the expenses of the orchestra, and but for the troubles incurred by the union would not have discontinued its work two years ago.

On Mrs. Taft's departure for the Philippines with Mr. Taft when he was made Governor of the islands the Orchestra Association presented her with a huge antique silver centrepiece curiously wrought. Upon the broad edge of this piece the ladies had engraved the music of the "New World Symphony," written while he was in this country by Dvorak, and of which Mrs. Taft is very fond. The centrepiece now occupies a place of honor on one of the old side pieces of mahogany in the dining room of the Secretary of War. So much does Mrs. Taft think of it that she carried it with her to the Philippines, where it always occupied the center of her table, sometimes with a growing fern in it and sometimes filled with roses.

Another gift of the Empress of the Philippines and Mrs. Taft is a large Japanese tapestry of exquisite design and execution, representing Columbus at the court of Isabella. After the completion of this piece the design was destroyed. A heavy silver scroll roll of handsome repoussé work is on this cabinet, and was

presented to the Secretary on his last visit to Manila by the English Club of Manila, with an address of welcome. Still another piece is one of German enamel in exquisite colors, given the Secretary by the late Pope Leo XIII. on the Secretary's mission to the Vatican. This is set in heavy silver with the crest of the Vatican on the back.

The centrepiece upon Secretary Taft's great mahogany dining table just now is the piece presented to the Tafts by the Chinese residents in Shanghai on their recent visit to China. Another piece prominent in the dining room is the silver punch bowl presented by the Japanese Prince Fushimi. It stands upon four short, graceful legs and has handsome repoussé work upon it.

The soft pillows, lamps, candlesticks, bronze ornaments, in which the Taft home abounds, all have the stamp of the Orient. The heavy satin hangings, all removed now for the summer season, the rugs and portieres, are heavy with embroidery and of splendid coloring.

SOUVENIRS FROM MANY LANDS.

The Taft home is a souvenir hall. Every apartment abounds in ornaments as well as useful and necessary articles, which have their sentimental value as well as intrinsic worth. A cabinet heavily carved which stands in the front drawing room holds innumerable noteworthy pieces. Conspicuous among these are two boxes of gold lacquer work presented to Mrs.

Mrs. Taft is not especially devoted to dress, yet she is always well and appropriately gowned. One never carries the impression of clothes after meeting her, yet when questioned the recollection is always that the costume was appropriate, well made and becoming.

Last winter Mrs. Taft was in mourning on account of the death of Secretary Taft's mother, who died before he got back from his trip around the world. The Secretary and Mrs. Taft eschewed all social festivities throughout the winter. Mourning was laid aside this month, although Mrs. Taft still clings to the black, white, gray and violet of second mourning.

Even if Locked in, He Was Determined to Fill His Engagement.

A few days ago the doorkeeper of a house in Raszynka street, St. Petersburg, was astounded to see a man jump from a window in the third story of the building and then, apparently uninjured, proceed at a brisk pace along the street. It took some time for the doorkeeper to recover from his astonishment, but when he did he was at once started in pursuit, for it seemed to him that the fugitive must be either a dynamiter or a burglar.

Several other doorkeeper joined in the pursuit—for in Russia the doorkeeper has the power of a constable—and at the corner of Glasgow street the unknown one was seized and handed over to the police. He turned out to be a Japanese called Yokado, 18 years

of age and a member of a troupe of Japanese acrobats who are at present performing in St. Petersburg. He explained that one of the servants in the flat where he had a room had gone away with the key after looking the door, probably under the impression that there was nobody in the house.

Yokado waited more than an hour for her to return and then, fearing that he would be late at the music hall where he was performing, made the perilous jump which had so astonished the neighborhood.

ILLINOIS TURTLE FARM.

Owner Expects Also to Raise Gold Fish and Guinea Pigs.

From the Macomb Journal.

A mud turtle farm, which will also be devoted to the raising of mushrooms, gold fish and guinea pigs, is the latest venture of the head of one of the big Western railroads. President H. I. Miller of the Chicago

and Eastern Illinois is the man who has his upon this novel form of diversified farming as a relief from business cares, and he intends incidentally to show the farmers of the great west that 200 acres of terrapins and guinea pigs will pay bigger dividends than 200

The farm is located at Barrington, a suburb of Chicago, and is a tract of rolling timbered land. Numerous lagoons and roads are being dug at various points on the property and an elaborate system of irrigating ditches will be established. The guinea pig yards will cover several acres and will be the largest in the expected in the country. The mushrooms will be allowed to grow wild, wherever they grow in marshy spots and damp woods in the woods.

With the starting of the farm comes to light some interesting facts about a little known industry. It is estimated that over 10,000 turtles are consumed annually in the East, and the greater part are mud turtles, soft shells and snapping turtles. The demand for mushrooms is enormous.

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MISS HELEN TAFT.

Taft by the Empress of Japan on her visit there last fall with the Secretary.

One box is very large and is inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with the imperial crest heavily inlaid with gold. The other box is somewhat smaller, but with more intricate design inside and with a number of tiny drawers, such as only the Japanese and Chinese know the art of making to perfection.

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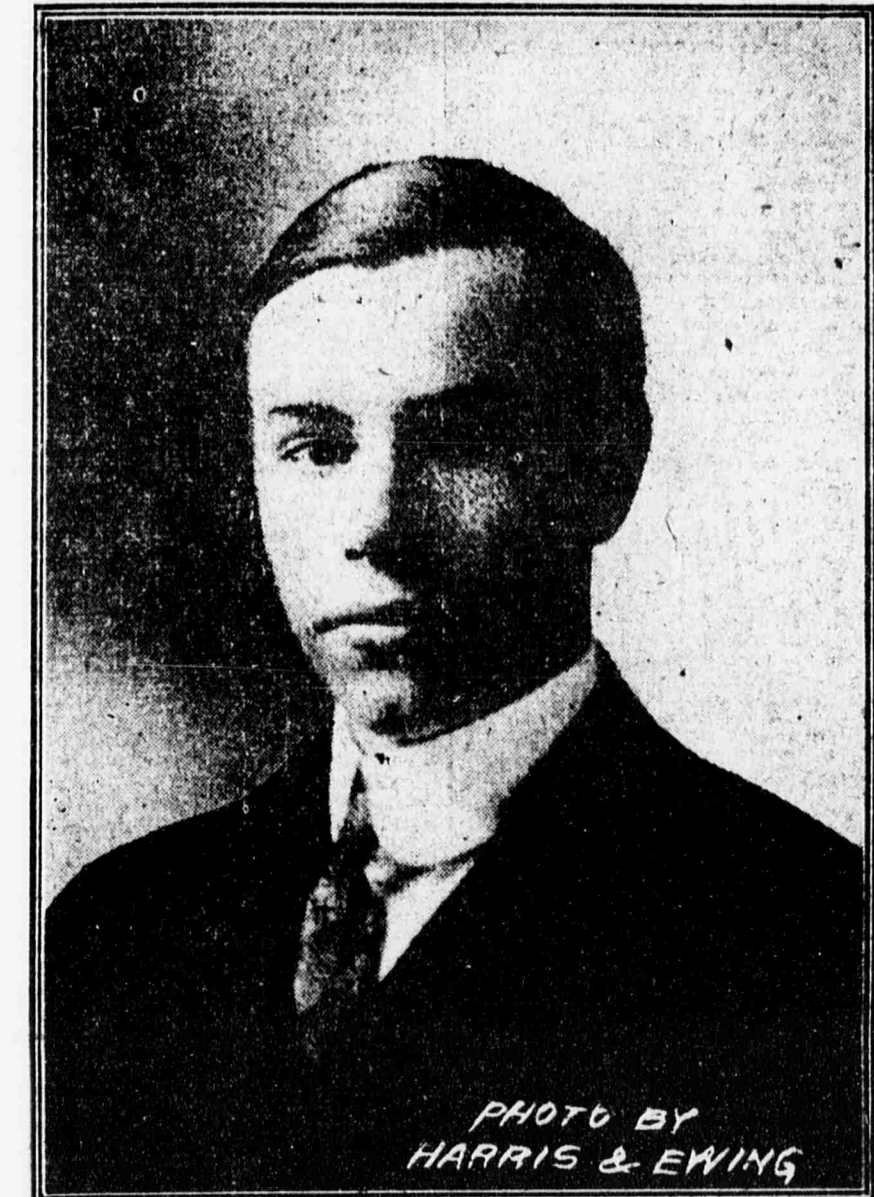
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ROBERT ALPHONSO TAFT.

the ingenious young woman, of course. And yet the glimpses one does get of the Taft household make one wish for more. The whole spirit of the place is frank, unaffected, genuine.

With a hearty "Hello, old man!" the Secretary meets a friend at the door, turns the visitor around and carries him off with him. In the library Miss Helen's voice can be heard planning to ride in the afternoon with her young brother Charlie.

They have good voices, these Tafts; well pitched, likable voices. Vocal cords are wonderful tollates when it comes to secrets of character, but the Taft family do not need to resort to silence for self-protection. The more they talk the better you like them.

## MRS. TAFT AND HER VISITORS.

When Mrs. Taft, for instance, comes in and says with pleasant directness: "Why, certainly, if you have any questions to ask I shall be glad to answer them," you say to yourself: "She's all right. She's willing to play the game and play it squarely."

And that is precisely what Mrs. Taft is trying to do. Pictures? She knows her pictures are not good likenesses of her. The reporter had to choose from a dozen or more photographs the one which seemed the least unlike her.

She is not pining to have these misrepresentations of the camera held up to the public gaze. But if it is part of the game, the great game of having one's husband become the President of his country, why, all right; take the picture along.

She treats the questions asked her in the same way. She is genuine, frank, unaffected. She does not take herself too seriously. She puts on no foolish frills.

She has no false pride and no false humility. At each question her gray eyes light up with interest, not, if you please, because she is thinking of herself, but because she has the uncommon faculty of forgetting her own personality in an outside subject.

For example, the merest chance started the conversation on the subject of reading. At once her face was alive with interest. Reading? She loves it.

"Why," she says, "I was brought up on Jane Austen, and she is my best liked writer to this day. In my father's library there was a small copy of 'Pride and Prejudice,' which I think we children must have

outdoor boy too. He has a pony his uncle gave him. I'm sure it has a name, but I can't remember what it is.

"He rides his pony, skates, rows and plays baseball. He was on Quentin Roosevelt's team, and I am reliably informed that he played very well, but not long ago we suddenly discovered that he no longer belonged to the aggregation.

"We joked him a good deal about being dropped from the team, but he had nothing to offer by way of explanation, and it was some time before we discovered that a Y. M. C. A. picnic had been the rock on which he and the team had split.

"Charlie wanted to go to the picnic, but was informed that if he did so and failed to attend a practice game of the team on the same day he couldn't stay on the team. He was determined to go to the picnic and went. But I understand that he was a good player while he lasted," she finished with a laugh.

ROBERT IN HIS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS.

"Bob, who is 18 and a sophomore at Yale, is not prominent in athletics, though he has persisted in trying for a good physical development. He has gone in for rowing, and I believe is on the second crew of his class. You know, though, with a little ring of pride in her tone, "that in scholarship he leads his class, as his father did before him."

"Bob went in with honors from the preparatory school and took various prizes in his freshman year. There are no prizes in the sophomore year, but his standing not only is the best for this year, but sets a new record for the sophomores class. Bob intends to be a lawyer, you know, like his father. He chose his father's fraternity, Psi U, and seems to be following him in every way he can."

"And Miss Helen?" suggests the reporter. "It is no easy thing to be admitted to Bryn Mawr. Will she make it all right?"

"You might ask her," says Mrs. Taft as a fair haired girl in a pink frock, the color of her cheeks, came through the hall.

MISS TAFT GOING TO BRYN MAWR.

The daughter of the Taft household has the dimpled chin which is so striking a characteristic of her mother, but she really looks more like her father. She has soft, golden brown hair, gray eyes and excellent features. Her manner is charmingly simple and direct. She is as attractive and

Pain in his head thinks it's a brain fag. "Sounds good, doesn't it, brain fag. Good thing to tell your friends about. Get lots of sympathy from your wife. Brain fag! John's poor tired brain! I fix 'em, though."

"What is it? It's stomach fag, that's what it is. Did you ever stop to think what and where and when, but she really looks more like her father. She has soft, golden brown hair, gray eyes and excellent features. Her manner is charmingly simple and direct. She is as attractive and

"I tell you, young man, eating as practised by the average human animal is the most dangerous pastime ever invented by man. It is the greatest menace to mental growth and physical health that has survived the ancient and dishonorable practice of head fattening."

"It kills more than war, maims more than

football and motorcycling, and it is a more general life shortener than opium. Why, this business of eating has come to be such a complicated affair that whenever any one finds a food that is reasonably harmless he patents it."

"We eat too much. The human animal performs his best feats of mentality on an empty stomach. There is just so much blood in the system. If it is kept busy digesting food all the time it has no chance to go to the head and help the brain."